

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
NASHVILLE DIVISION**

**ANTHONY LAVELLE STEVISON #279405,** )  
  )  
  )  
**Plaintiff,**  )  
  )  
  )  
**v.**  )  
  )  
**SHANOVIA HIGGINS, et al.,**                      )  
  )  
  )  
**Defendants.**                                      )

**M E M O R A N D U M**

The plaintiff, a pre-trial detainee currently held at the Davidson County Sheriff's Office in Nashville, Tennessee, brings this *pro se, in forma pauperis* action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Shanovia Higgins, a private citizen, and the State of Tennessee, alleging that he was falsely arrested in May 2015. (Docket No. 1).

The plaintiff's complaint is before the court for an initial review pursuant to the Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A, and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e.

**I. PLRA Screening Standard**

Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the court must dismiss any portion of a civil complaint filed *in forma pauperis* that fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, is frivolous, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. Section 1915A similarly requires initial review of any "complaint in a civil action in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity," *id.* § 1915A(a), and summary dismissal of the complaint on the same grounds as those articulated in § 1915(e)(2)(B). *Id.* § 1915A(b).

The Sixth Circuit has confirmed that the dismissal standard articulated by the Supreme Court in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009), and *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007), “governs dismissals for failure to state a claim under those statutes because the relevant statutory language tracks the language in Rule 12(b)(6).” *Hill v. Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470–71 (6th Cir. 2010). Thus, to survive scrutiny on initial review, “a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). “[A] district court must (1) view the complaint in the light most favorable to the plaintiff and (2) take all well-pleaded factual allegations as true.” *Tackett v. M & G Polymers, USA, LLC*, 561 F.3d 478, 488 (6th Cir. 2009) (citing *Gunasekera v. Irwin*, 551 F.3d 461, 466 (6th Cir. 2009) (citations omitted)).

Although *pro se* pleadings are to be held to a less stringent standard than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers, *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520–21 (1972); *Jourdan v. Jabe*, 951 F.2d 108, 110 (6th Cir. 1991), the courts’ “duty to be ‘less stringent’ with *pro se* complaints does not require us to conjure up [unpledged] allegations.” *McDonald v. Hall*, 610 F.2d 16, 19 (1st Cir. 1979) (citation omitted).

## **II. Section 1983 Standard**

The plaintiff brings his claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Title 42 U.S.C. § 1983 creates a cause of action against any person who, acting under color of state law, abridges “rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws . . . .” To state a claim under § 1983, the plaintiff must allege and show two elements: (1) that he was deprived of a right secured by the

Constitution or laws of the United States; and (2) that the deprivation was caused by a person acting under color of state law. *Tahfs v. Proctor*, 316 F.3d 584, 590 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2003); 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

### **III. Alleged Facts**

According to the complaint, the plaintiff was falsely arrested on May 13, 2015, by an unnamed Davidson County police officer. The complaint alleges that the officer arrested the plaintiff based on a false accusation by Shanovia Higgins, a private citizen. (Docket No. 1 at p. 5).

### **IV. Analysis**

First, the plaintiff names the State of Tennessee as a defendant. The Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution bars civil rights against a state and its agencies and departments in federal court. *See Will v. Mich. Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 66 (1989). Eleventh Amendment immunity “bars all suits, whether for injunctive, declaratory or monetary relief” against a state and its agencies. *Thiokol Corp. v. Dep't of Treasury*, 987 F.2d 376, 381 (6th Cir.1993). The plaintiff's claims against the State of Tennessee must therefore be dismissed.

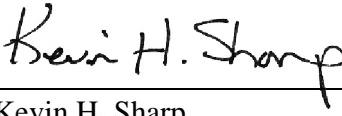
Next, the plaintiff names Shanovia Higgins as the only other defendant to this action. Based on the allegations in the complaint, Shanovia Higgins is a private citizen who accused the plaintiff of threatening her and her children. (Docket No. 1 at p. 5). As a private citizen, Ms. Higgins is not a “person acting under color of state law” pursuant to § 1983. Thus, all claims against Ms. Higgins will be dismissed.

### **V. Conclusion**

As set forth above, the court finds the plaintiff's complaint fails to state claims upon which relief can be granted under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. In the absence of an actionable claim, the court is obliged to dismiss the complaint *sua sponte*. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).

Accordingly, the complaint will be dismissed.

An appropriate order will be entered.

  
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Kevin H. Sharp  
Chief United States District Judge